UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
REGION 5

DATE: December 29, 2000

SUBJECT: Reports of Significant Developments and Activities Ending on December 22, 2000

FROM: William E. Muno, Director
Superfund Division

TO: Francis X. Lyons
Regional Administrator

David A. Ullrich
Deputy Regional Administrator

The activities listed below are organized by site-specific activities and other significant developments:

SITE-SPECIFIC ACTIVITIES

Walton Hills Diesel Spill, Walton Hills, Cuyahoga County, Ohio

On December 20, 2000, at the request of Ohio EPA, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (U.S. EPA) Emergency Response Branch responded to a Diesel Fuel spill on an unnamed tributary to Tinkers Creek in Walton Hills, Ohio. The volume of spilled fuel was approximately 300 gallons; however, to date, no source has been identified.

Ohio EPA initially responded to the incident on December 14, 2000, as a result of a citizen's report. A local resident discovered the spill as a result of his dog becoming contaminated while crossing the creek. The resident reported the incident to Ohio EPA who, in turn, mobilized a contractor to contain the spill. The contractor, established a siphon dam and sorbent booms on the creek.

The creek is mostly frozen over and requires further cleanup of diesel. Ohio EPA requested U.S. EPA's assistance as they don't have the funding to complete the response. The U.S. EPA On-Scene Coordinator (OSC) established a Pollution Removal Funding Authority (PRFA) to allow Ohio EPA to continue their response efforts and complete the cleanup. In addition, Ohio EPA will

continue to attempt to determine the responsible party as the cleanup continues.

Contact: Mark Durno (440-250-1743)

Mahoningside Power Plant Site, Warren, Trumbull County, Ohio

On December 7, 2000, U.S. EPA's Emergency Response Branch has completed its first phase of activities at the Mahoningside Power Plant site located in Warren, Ohio. These activities include the following: removal and disposal of over 400 tons of polychlorinated biphenyls (PCB)-contaminated soil and sediment from the structure of the former power plant; clean-out of piping, drains, sumps, and conduit in the structure; assessment of the Mahoning River via sediment sampling for PCBs; and, assessment of the area sub-surface via drilling and sampling of soil and shale.

U.S. EPA continues to treat water at the site as it infiltrates the structure. After assessment analytical data is received and reviewed by U.S. EPA, plans will be developed and implemented to remove the remaining PCB-contaminated materials from the site. These activities will likely be initiated in early January 2001.

Contact: Mark Durno (440-250-1743)

Borehole Geophysical Investigation Support, Tremont Landfill, Tremont, Ohio

On December 4-7, 2000, Jim Ursic (Field Services Section) worked with the U.S. Geological Survey's Borehole Geophysics Project team from Denver in the use of borehole geophysical logging tools to evaluate sub-surface conditions at the Tremont Landfill located in Tremont, Ohio. Several logging tools were used to evaluate the site by lowering them into existing monitoring wells having an inside diameter of only two inches.

The purpose of the survey was to determine the location (if any) of perched water zones, to confirm the geology as documented by drillers' logs, and determine if any zones of extremely high or low conductivities exist which may indicate the existence of contaminant plume(s).

Contact: Jim Ursic (312-353-1526)

Site Deletion (National Priorities List), Ilade Energy Company Superfund Site, East Cape Girardeau

On November 9, 2000, a Proposed and Direct Final Notice of Deletion from the National Priorities List (NPL) were published in the Federal Register for the Ilada Energy Company Superfund site in East Cape Girardeau, Illinois. The removal action conducted between 1989 and 1991 substantially mitigated the human health and environmental threats posed by this site. This action resulted in the removal from the site of all tanks and their contents, piping, structures and grossly contaminated soils. A total of 442,162 gallons of oil and sludge were sent off-site to be burned as waste fuel in cement kilns; 142,700 gallons of polychlorinated biphenyl (PCB) contaminated oil and sludge was incinerated at a permitted off-site facility; 865,700 gallons of contaminated water were treated and discharged to the Mississippi River after results showed that it met the Clean Water Act standards; 1055 cubic yards of soil and miscellaneous debris were disposed off-site as special waste and, 637 cubic yards were disposed off-site as demolition debris. All wastes were removed from the site and treated or disposed of elsewhere.

No further remedial action Record of Decision (ROD) was signed on September 27, 1992.

Contacts: Jon Peterson (312-353-1422)
Gladys Beard (312-886-7253)

OTHER SIGNIFICANT DEVELOPMENTS

North Lawndale Mercury Spill, Chicago, Illinois

On December 15, 2000, On-Scene Coordinator (OSC) Fred Bartman and Environmental Scientist Keith Lesniak responded to a report of mercury spilled in a two-flat apartment building at 635 North Lawndale in Chicago, Illinois. The following day OSC Verneta Simon and Superfund Technical Assistance and Response Team (START) member Brad White responded with a mercury spill kit and the Emergency Response Contractor to cleanup the mercury spilled in a closet. Eventually, it was determined that the next door neighbor had been involved with the mercury and the public school across the street from the home, Ryerson Elementary. Tentatively, the mercury-contaminated waste generated at 635 North Lawndale will be shipped for disposal on December 26, 2000. Discussions with the Chicago Board of Education are ongoing since

it has been alleged that the mercury was confiscated by the school on November 27, 2000, however, U.S. EPA was not informed until December 15, 2000.

Contacts: Fred Bartman (312-886-0776)
Keith Lesniak (312-886-7189)
Verneta Simon (312-886-3601)

Oshkosh Rail Car Fire, Oshkosh, Wisconsin

On December 16, 2000, U.S. EPA received notification of a fire on a sodium hydro sulfite rail car in Oshkosh, Winnebago County, Wisconsin. On-Scene Coordinator (OSC) Sonia R. Vega arrived onsite the morning of December 17, 2000. Unified Incident Command System was in place, and Fire Chief Tim Franz was the incident commander. Upon arrival OSC Sonia Vega was notified that about 1200 residents had been evacuated the night of December 16, 2000, due to the potential release of SO_2 and H_2O gases as a result of the fire. The box rail car contained thirty-two 4400 pound totes of dry sodium hydro sulfite. The chemical ignited unexpectedly releasing a plume of smoke with a distinctive sulfur odor. The Red Cross and Salvation Army had set up a shelter at a local school's gym, and were providing meals to the displaced residents. Representatives from the manufacturer Clariant Corporation arrived onsite to assist local responders. Based on past experiences and after extensive discussions between local, State, and Federal agencies onsite it was decided to keep the evacuation zone as established, and developed an onsite treatment strategy for the burning car. Treatment involved opening the box car fully to accelerate the burning process, and following the overnight accelerated burning the individual product totes were removed and emptied into water vats to react the remaining product. The resulting sulfite bleach was disposed of at the local water treatment plant. As mid-afternoon on December 19, 2000, all residents were back in their homes after real time monitoring showed no evidence of contamination. The success of this response was the result of a very well organized local emergency response team. City, County, State and Federal agencies worked together to complete the onsite treatment safely and in a relatively short time.

Contacts: Sonia R. Vega (312-886-7191)
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Emergency Response, Ironton High School Gas Release, Ironton, Ohio

On November 29, 2000, U.S. EPA Emergency Response Branch responded to an unknown chemical odor at Ironton High School located in Ironton, Ohio. The report noted that a number of students were sent to the hospital with complaints of headaches, burning, and redness of the eyes, nausea, upset stomach, and nasal congestion. U.S. EPA's On-Scene Coordinator (OSC) Kurt Grunert and Superfund Technical Assistance & Response Team (START) arrived at the high school at the request of the City of Ironton's Superintendent of Schools. Upon arrival, U.S. EPA and START began the investigation by conducting real-time air monitoring of the entire school and outside perimeter. With the use of the air monitor unit (Miran SapphlRe), U.S. EPA was able to identify and track the chemical odor to the air handling system of the school. Methane at concentrations of 28 to 32 parts per million was detected in the air tunnels beneath the basement of the school. Upon further investigation, U.S. EPA and the Ohio EPA representative discovered a cave had been formed under the air tunnels of the school. The chemical odor was determined to be "sewer-gas" as the result of a major storm water sewer pipe break beneath the school's foundation. As the pipeline was fixed, it was noted that "sewer-gas" directly associated with the City of Ironton's main sewer pipe was being circulated into the school's air handling system and distributed throughout the school. Following pipe repair, U.S. EPA and START conducted extensive air monitoring of the school and documented only background levels of methane and no levels of hydrogen sulfide gas. Prior to the school being reopened, U.S. EPA, Ohio EPA, and members of the school board conducted a public meeting to inform students, parents, and teachers of the incident and to address any chemical exposure issues associated with the odor. The entire public meeting was broadcasted live on TV via several local network stations.

Contact: Kurt Grunert (734-692-7684)

Emergency Response, Dearborn Heights "Chemical" House, Dearborn Heights, Michigan

On December 9, 2000, the Dearborn Heights Fire Department responded to a rescue call at 25725 Cherry Hill Road. Upon rendering assistance to the owner of the home, firefighters smelled a strong chemical odor within the house. They searched the residence and located several chemical storage areas in the basement. One of the chemicals discovered was labeled

"nitroglycerin." The Michigan State Police Bomb Squad was called in to remove the nitroglycerin from the home. On December 10, 2000, the fire department contacted Region 5's Emergency Response duty officer, Steve Faryan, to request assistance from U.S. EPA. U.S. EPA's On-Scene Coordinator (OSC) Kurt Grunert was contacted and responded to the incident along with Superfund Technical Assistance & Response Team (START). Upon arrival, an assessment of the house was conducted. The basement contained approximately 250 containers of hazardous chemicals. Additionally, large containers of hazardous chemical were located in the garage. U.S. EPA and START conducted real time air monitoring and found no hazardous atmospheres associated with the presence of the chemicals. Five major gas leaks were found, however, associated with the gas service in the house. MichCon was contacted and fixed the leaks within the house. Discovered during MichCon inspection was the presence of an explosive atmosphere located in the attic space of the house. U.S.EPA notified the son of the owner that cleanup would need to begin within 3 to 5 days at the owner's cost. U.S. EPA activated the emergency response contractor to provide security at the site until removal activities began. On December 15, 2000, a contractor was hired by the owners son to remove all the hazardous chemicals. U.S. EPA and START performed oversight of the cleanup efforts and security was then discontinued.

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